

Capital Improvement Programs

Capital programs are simply the coordination of planning and money. The capital improvements program, with respect to transportation, is a long range plan for the spending of money on street improvements, acquisition of rights-of-way and other improvements within the bounds of projected revenues. Municipal funds should be available for construction of street improvements which are a municipal responsibility, right-of-way cost sharing on facilities designated a Division of Highways responsibility and advance purchase of right-of-way where such action is warranted.

Historically, cities and towns have depended, to a great degree, on Federal or State funding to solve their transportation problems. Chapter 136-Article 3A of the Road and Highway Laws of North Carolina clearly outlines the responsibilities and obligations of the various governmental bodies regarding highway improvements. North Carolina Highway Bill 1211, passed in 1988, limits the role of municipalities in right-of-way cost sharing for projects once they are programed in the NCDOT Transportation Improvement Program. Set-back regulations, right-of-way dedications and reservations play a major role in the ultimate cost of many facilities. Only in special cases will the municipality be able to enjoy the benefits of highway improvements without some form of investment.

Development Reviews

Driveway access to a State-maintained street or highway is reviewed by the District Engineer's office and by the Traffic Engineering Branch of the North Carolina Department of Transportation prior to access being allowed. Any development expected to generate large volumes of traffic (ie. shopping centers, fast food restaurants, large industries, etc.) may be comprehensively studied by staff from the Traffic Engineering, Planning and Environmental, and Roadway Design Branches of NCDOT. If done at an early stage, it is often possible to significantly improve the development's accessibility at minimal expense. Since the municipality is the first point of contact for developers, it is important that the municipality advise them of this review requirement and cooperate in the review process.

Other Funding Sources

1. Assess user impact fees to fund transportation projects. These fees, called "facility fees" in the legislation, are to be based upon "reasonable and uniform considerations of capital costs to be incurred by the town as a result of new construction. The facility fee must bear a direct relationship to additional or expanded public capital costs of the community service facilities to be rendered for the inhabitants, occupants of the new construction, or those associated with the development process."
2. Enact a bond issue to fund street improvements.